

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A floor mat laid in a small ~~animals~~ animal rearing cage for housing and rearing ~~a small animals~~ animal, said floor mat ~~is being~~ is a sheet ~~comprising a temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animals;~~ having a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animals; animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small ~~animals~~ animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body.

2. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the ~~size of said sheet covers at least the abdomen and the head of said small animals~~ has a temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.

3. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

4. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 1, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

5. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim ~~[[4]]~~ 1, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in a shape of ~~a~~ a sheet.

6. (Currently Amended) A small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing small animals, said small animal rearing cage comprising: a rearing box having a floor and a wall

provided at a circumference of the floor; and a floor mat formed with a sheet having a ~~temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animals~~, a flexibility to a degree that can wrap the body of the small animals animal and a size that covers at least the entire abdomen of the small animals animal, where the flexibility and size are such that the sheet is capable of being seamlessly folded onto itself, even after being laid down in a form where the sheet is randomly folded onto itself so as to form a fold large enough for the small animal to hide at least half of its body.

7. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 6, wherein ~~said floor mat is positioned upon the floor of said rearing box in such a way that a piece of sheet is folded to form folds~~ the sheet has a temperature holding property to a degree that can keep the body temperature of the small animal.

8. (Previously Presented) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 6, wherein said floor mat is larger in size than the floor area of said rearing box.

9. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 2, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

10. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim 3 ~~2~~, wherein the sheet ~~has a tearing resistance~~ is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet.

11. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 7, wherein ~~said floor mat is larger in size than the floor area of said rearing box~~ the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

12. (Currently Amended) The ~~floor mat~~ small animal rearing cage according to Claim 9 ~~6~~, wherein the sheet has a tearing resistance.

13. (Previously Presented) The floor mat according to Claim 5, wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.

14. (Currently Amended) The floor mat according to Claim 3 2, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in a the shape of a sheet.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 8 6, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in a shape of a sheet.

17. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim ~~4~~ 7, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in a shape of a sheet.

18. (Previously Presented) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 16, wherein the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.

19. (Currently Amended) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim ~~4~~ 7, wherein the ~~improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric~~ sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

20. (New) The small animal rearing cage according to Claim 19, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet.

21. (New) A floor mat laid in a small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing small animals, said floor mat being a sheet, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet and the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.

22. (New) The floor mat according to Claim 21, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.

23. (New) A small animal rearing cage for housing and rearing small animals, said small animal rearing cage comprising: a rearing box having a floor and a wall provided at a circumference of the floor; and a floor mat formed with a sheet, wherein the sheet is formed of an improved cellulose fabric wherein carboxyl group-introduced cellulose is formed in the shape of a sheet and the improved cellulose fabric contains 40 to 140 millimole carboxyl group per 100 grams of dry fabric.

24. (New) A small animal rearing cage according to Claim 23, wherein the sheet has a water absorption property and deodorization property.